EXTRACTS

FROM

CORRESPONDENCE

BETWEEN

A MUSLIM AND A CHRISTIAN

Translated by:

Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi

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Publication Secretary,
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In the Name of Allah,
the Most Compassionate, the Merciful

Praise belongs to Allah, the Lord of all beings;
the Most Compassionate, the Merciful;
the Master of the Day of Judgement;
Thee only we serve, and to Thee alone we pray
for succour;
Guide us in the straight path;
the path of those whom Thou hast blessed,
who are immune from Thy wrath
and have never gone astray.

0' Allah send your blessings to the head of
your messengers and the last of
your prophets, Muhammad
and his pure and cleansed progeny.
Also send your blessings to all your
prophets and envoys.

بِسْمِ اللهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ
اَلْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ
مَالِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ
اِهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ
أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ
وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ

اَللّٰهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَىٰ
سَيِّدِ رُسُلِكَ وَخَاتَمِ أَنْبِيَائِكَ
مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِهِ الطَّيِّبِينَ الطَّاهِرِينَ
وَصَلِّ عَلَىٰ جَمِيعِ الْأَنْبِيَاءِ وَالْمُرْسَلِينَ

CONTENTS

قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ تَعَالَوْا إِلَىٰ كَلِمَةٍ سَوَاءٍ
بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ أَلَّا نَعْبُدَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ وَلَا نُشْرِكَ
بِهِ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَتَّخِذَ بَعْضُنَا بَعْضًا أَرْبَابًا مِنْ دُونِ
اللَّهِ فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَقُولُوا اشْهَدُوا بِأَنَّا مُسْلِمُونَ .

(آل عمران : ۶۴)

"Say: `0 People of the Book? come to an equitable proposition between us and you that we shall not serve any but Allah and *(that)* we shall not associate aught with Him, and *(that)* some of us shall not take others for lords besides Allah;' but if they turn back, then say: `Bear witness that we are Muslims' *(Those who submitted to the Will of Allah)"* (Qur'an, 3:64).

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

In the Name of Al1Bh the Beneficent,
the Merciful

PREFACE

Some time ago, a Muslim youth had correspondence with a Christian institution. His aim was academic enquiry about the authenticity of the `Gospels' and other Christian scriptures. The correspondence continued for a long time; but the Muslim correspondent did not get any satisfactory reply to his fundamental questions.

The correspondence was brought to our notice; we found that it throws light on some useful subjects, and decided to put these extracts in- the hands of our readers.

The original letters are preserved in our office.

The only aim of publishing this booklet is to clearly present the facts to all concerned, and especially to Christian youths, so that they may build their lives on the foundation of truth.

We pray to Allah to give the educated Christian youths an urge to seek the truth, and to make them free of prejudice. We hope that they will read these questions with open mind, will re-examine their faith and, like that Muslim youth, will think independently, keeping themselves free from the fetters of dogmas and preconceived ideas.

Dar Rah-i Haq Publications

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TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

This is the translation of a Persian booklet

خلاصه‌ای از نامه‌های یک مسلمان و یک‌مسیحی

published by "Dar Rah-i Haq "·Qum, Iran. I have translated it on the request of "World Organization for Islamic Services, Tehran. "

it faithfully represents the original, although it is not a literal translation. But I have made the following two changes:-

1. The original was published in a Muslim country; and the publishers thought it enough, when giving any Qur'anic reference, to mention the chapter and verse only, without quoting the actual words.

In this translation, I have quoted the verses,

wherever necessary, to make the meaning clear to those readers who do not know the Qur'an.

2. In one letter, there was a reference to a Persian dictionary of the Bible, to show the usage of the word `Day' in Jewish literature. I have substituted it with a relevant quotation from The Westminster Dictionary of the Bible.

Lastly, I have taken the liberty of adding (as an Appendix) a few pages from my own book "Qur'an and Iladith," which has been published by the Bilal Muslim Mission of Tanzania, Dar-es-Salaam. This addition, I hope, will throw more light on the subjects discussed in this booklet, and will, thus, enhance its value.

Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi

Dar-es-Salaam,
TANZANIA.
29th November,1974

MUSLIM: Who was the author of the Gospels, and when were they written?

CHRISTIAN: About eight persons among those who believed in Christ, in the first century of the Christian era, wrote twenty seven books and letters which constitute the Gospel or New Testament; and the date of their writing is from 45 A.D. to 90 A.D.

MUSLIM: Please let me know the names of the authors. Also, whether they were trustworthy and free from errors (so that we may have full trust in them) or not.

CHRISTIAN: Four great personalities, who wrote the Gospels, were Matthew, Mark, Luke

and John. They wrote the Gospels in Greek language; they were, very holy and pious, so much that we call them Saints and Apostles of God.

MUSLIM: Obviously, they should be holy. But I would. like to know what is the basis of your belief that they were, in fact, holy.

CHRISTIAN: I request you to keep your questions confined to the lessons (i.e. the lessons of correspondence course which the Christians send to the Muslim youths . to convert them to Christianity); we cannot reply to questions unrelated to the lessons.

MUSLIM: I am sorry to point put that in my previous letter a most important question was asked, but you did not give it any importance.

Obviously, unless a man has trust and confidence in a speaker or, author, he cannot

have any trust or confidence in his sayings or writing. Therefore, the question of the identity and character of the writers of the New Testament must be settled before all lessons and every topic.

I hope you will reply to my previous questions as soon as possible.

CHRISTIAN: Sorry. I cannot remember that any of your letters has remained unanswered. Anyhow, I would like you to write again the subject matter of your question.

MUSLIM: Your avoidance of my enquiry about the identity and character of the authors of the Gospel has made me more suspicious about them. You very well understood the importance of my question. Still you did not attend to it. Instead, you sent me some tracts which had no connection at all with my enquiry.

If you have any proof concerning the identity and character of those writers, please let me know.

CHRISTIAN: Our greatest proof is that today people, through the message of this very Gospel (New Testament), come to know Jesus Christ, are saved from their sins, and get the love of God, and find peace and joy. In other words, effectiveness of the Gospel's words is our greatest proof.

Although this book did not come to us from heaven, the people who wrote it were guided by the Holy Ghost.

MUSLIM: So you think that effectiveness of a word is the greatest proof of its truth and authenticity'. If we accept this argument, then you will have to admit the truth of so many wrong religions and ideologies which have enchanted a vast multitude of people within a short period.

We know that Buddhism is one of the major religions of the world, which is being followed by such a large population since the sixth century B.C. The teachings of Buddha are accepted like divine revelation in East and South-east Asia. Still you say that that religion is baseless and cannot be accepted as a divine teaching.

If you truly believe that effectiveness of the word is the proof of its truth, then why are you not coming within the fold of Islam, which has attracted such a large number of people in every part of the world, and has more than 750 million followers?

If this is your "greatest proof," then I wonder about the value of your other proofs.

When the Muslim scholars want to prove the truth of Islam, they do not put forward its effectiveness as the proof; they bring other arguments.

For example, they say: One of the proofs of the truth of Islam is the miracle of the

Qur'an. This book reveals so many secrets of the universe; teaches the most perfect code of life, in the most miraculous language. For the last fourteen centuries it is challenging the mankind to bring, if they can, even one chapter like it, but nobody has ever succeeded to meet this challenge.

Dear friend! I have requested you several times to describe to me the lives of the authors of the Gospels; unfortunately, I have not been favoured with a satisfactory reply yet. I repeat my request to explain to me, as you had promised earlier, clear proofs of their reliability.

CHRISTIAN: We mentioned earlier that the best arguments is the "savings" which we have tasted. Now, if you have any argument against it, please send it to us. We are awaiting for it.

MUSLIM: I am mentioning here some facts about some of the disciples and companions of Christ - that is, Peter, Matthew, John and

Judah. We may know from this sample, the character of "their" disciples. Please refer to the following verses of the Gospel in this connection.

Christ Hated Peter:

Matthew writes:

"From that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee. But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men" *(Matthew,* 16:21-23).

Do you see how Christ calls Peter a'Satan' and `offence unto Christ.' In spite of this, Matthew, Luke and Mark have incorporated into their Gospels the informations given by

Peter. Strange, isn't it?

Peter and John were Disobedient to Christ:

Mark writes about the events of the night when Christ was to be arrested and had told his disciples that one of them would betray him. Then:-

"And they came to a place which was named Gethsemane: and he saith to his disciples, Sit ye here, while I shall pray. And he taketh with him Peter and James and John, and began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy; And saith unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death: tarry ye here, and watch. And he went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. .... And he cometh, and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter, Simon, sleepest thou? couldest not thou watch one hour? Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation ... And again he went away, and prayed, and spake the same words. And when he

returned, he found them asleep again, (for their eyes were heavy,) neither wist they what to answer him" *(Mark, 14:32-40).*

Could such people (who did not obey the repeatedly-given order of Christ in such a grave situation) give any importance to his words at other times? How can one be sure that they remained firmly on right path during the bitter persecutions of the first century of Christian era?

The Authors Had No Faith:

The Gospels clearly show that Christ during the last days of his earthly life had told his ,disciples that he would "be killed, and be raised again the third day" *(Matthew, 16:21).* This is fully acknowledged and accepted by the Christians.

Still, on the third day when they were informed by various persons that Christ had arisen from his grave, they did not believe . it. At last, Christ himself came to them and upbraided them on their faithlessness. Here

are the relevant verses from Mark:-

"And she (Mary Magdalene) went and told them that had been with him, as they mourned and wept. And they, when they had heard that he was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not. After that he appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country. And they went and told it unto the residue: neither believed they them. Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen" *(Mark, 16:10-14).*

It proves that the disciples had no faith in the words of Christ, in spite of the declarations of Christ. If one believes in a prophet, he must accept whatever he hears from him. The quotations given above (from the New Testament) show clearly the "faith" and character of the authors of the Gospel and disciples of Christ. It shows them being called `Satan' by Christ;

of very weak determination and will, unfaithful and hard of heart. Naturally, one cannot have faith in the words of such people.

CHRISTIAN: It is true that the disciples of Christ were from among the sinner-most people of their time - one was a publican (collector of taxes), others were illiterate and un-cultured fishermen, and so on. But Christ cleansed them from sins. And they were human-beings like us, and sometimes they slipped into faithlessness and doubts; and Christ used to warn them and admonish them.

But the important point is that the disciples wrote their books after they were filled with the Holy Ghost.

MUSLIM: We may say, as you have admitted that the New Testament shows that the disciples and the authors of the Gospels, in spite of their constant company with Christ, sometimes slipped into faithlessness, doubts and

worldly considerations.

But it cannot be said that "they were like us." Because we (the Muslims) never have any doubt about the promises made by the Holy Prophet of Islam in whom we believe.

In any case, one cannot have confidence in the authors of the Gospels, as they sometimes slipped into doubts and faithlessness.

Regarding your assertion that they wrote the Gospels after being filled with the Holy Ghost: It is just a claim; and its basis is the writing of those very disciples and their companions whose truthfulness and trustworthiness is under discussion and dispute. Probably they made this claim because of the worldly consideration and faithlessness!

Moreover, the following facts do not fit with this assertion:-

(1) Nearness to the Lord Creator is a thing which does not come to sinful and unclean people. To reach near God, one must spend years and years in piety, virtuousness and

highest moral ethics.

How could it be possible for those disciples (with such faith and character as you have mentioned yourself) to reach such a high rank?

(2) The difference which they had about many important and fundamental matter - like the question whether the Law of Moses was to be followed - is an irrefutable proof that they did not receive any revelation, and were not filled with the Holy Ghost. Because it was impossible for the both parties of that dispute (following or not following the Law of Moses) to be right and guided by the Holy Ghost. It must be admitted that at least one party was wrong and in error. And it shows that they were not the recipient of divine revelation. Divine revelation is all Truth and has no contradiction or discrepancy.

(3) The mistakes made by them prove that they were not free from errors, and did not eceive divine guidance. For example-.-

Paul reviled the high priest Ananias. Then:-

"And they that stood by said, Revilest thou God's high priest'! Then said Paul, I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest: for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people" (Acts, 23:4-5).

(4) Contradictions, baseless assertions and wrong narrations of the New Testament are a clear proof that its writers were not guided by divine revelation or the Holy Ghost. Obviously, contradictory statements and baseless talks do not come from God.

CHRISTIAN: Do you know the Qur'an? Has not your prophet Muhammad told you to honour Torah (Tawrat) and Gospel (Injil) and to believe in them as they were word of God?

If the Gospel is full of baseless statements, then why Muhammad did not tell you so?

What defects have you seen in the teachings of Jesus and in the sayings mentioned in the Gospels?

MUSLIM: I have not seen any sentence in the Qur'an telling us to honour the present Torah and Gospel. On the contrary, the following verses show that God had revealed a 'Book,' Gospel by name, to Jesus Christ himself:-

قُولُوٓا ءَامَنَّا بِاللّٰهِ وَ مَآ أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْنَا وَ مَآ أُنْزِلَ
إِلَىٰ إِبْرٰهِيمَ وَ إِسْمٰعِيلَ وَ إِسْحٰقَ وَ يَعْقُوبَ
وَ الْأَسْبَاطِ وَ مَآ أُوتِيَ مُوسَىٰ وَ عِيسَىٰ . . .
(البقرة: ١٣٦)

"Say ye: We believe in God and the revelation given to us and to Abraham, Ishmael, Issac, Jacob, and the tribes, and that given to Moses and Jesus . . . " (Qur an, 2:136).

نَزَّلَ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ مُصَدِّقاً لِمَا بَيْنَ
يَدَيْهِ وَ أَنْزَلَ التَّوْرٰيةَ وَ الْإِنْجِيلَ (آل عمران: ٣)

"It is He who sent down to thee in truth the Book, confirming what went before it; and He sent down Torah and Gospel before it" (Quran,

3:3).

وَ يُعَلِّمُهُ الْكِتَابَ وَ الْحِكْمَةَ وَ التَّوْرَاةَ وَالْإِنْجِيلَ
(آل‌عمران : ۴۸)

"And God will teach him (Jesus) the Book and wisdom and Torah and Gospel" (Qur'an, 3:48).

As mentioned above, these verses of the Qur'an show that Gospel was a Book revealed to Jesus Christ. Now where is that Book? Obviously the manipulating hands did 'not keep it intact. What is now presented to us as `Gospel' is not the Gospel revealed to Jesus. Even you say that these books were written not by Jesus, but by his disciples.

Moreover, the New Testament describes the birth, arrest and "death" of Christ; it also contains the letters, most of which were written by Paul to various addresses. (But not a single line is from the writing of Jesus.) The New Testament is nothing more than a book of

biography (or history), containing the news of various events, beginning with words like `it came to pass,' `Jesus said' or `did' this or that. It is not related in any way with the `book' which was revealed by God to Jesus. It is but a book of history written by the followers of Christ in the first century of Christian era.

Also, the Qur'an with its brilliant and irrefutable logic criticizes the beliefs of the Jews and Christians, concerning, among other things, the Christians' belief of divinity of Jesus Christ and his being son of God. For example, see the following verses:-

لَقَدْ كَفَرَ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْمَسِيحُ ابْنُ
مَرْيَمَ وَ قَالَ الْمَسِيحُ يَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ اعْبُدُوا
اللَّهَ رَبِّي وَ رَبَّكُمْ ... لَقَدْ كَفَرَ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا
إِنَّ اللَّهَ ثَالِثُ ثَلَاثَةٍ ... مَا الْمَسِيحُ ابْنُ
مَرْيَمَ إِلَّا رَسُولٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ الرُّسُلُ ...
(المائدة: ٧٢، ٧٣، ٧٥)

"Verily, they do blaspheme who say: `God is Christ the son of Mary.' But said Christ: `O Children of Israel'. Worship God, My Lord and your Lord.' . . . They do blaspheme who say `God is one of three' For there is no God except one God. . . . And Christ son of Mary was no more,than an apostle; many were the apostles that passed away before him . . . " (Quran, 5: 72, 73, 75).

وَإِذْ قَالَ اللّٰهُ يَا عِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ ءَأَنْتَ قُلْتَ
لِلنَّاسِ اتَّخِذُونِي وَ أُمِّيَ إِلٰهَيْنِ مِنْ دُونِ اللّٰهِ
قَالَ سُبْحَانَكَ مَا يَكُونُ لِي أَنْ أَقُولَ مَا لَيْسَ
لِي بِحَقٍّ . . . مَا قُلْتُ لَهُمْ إِلَّا مَا أَمَرْتَنِي
بِهِ أَنِ اعْبُدُوا اللّٰهَ رَبِّي وَ رَبَّكُمْ . . .

(المآئده: ۱۱۶، ۱۱۷)

"And behold, God will say: `O Jesus son of Mary! Didst thou say unto men, `Worship me and my mother as gods instead of God?' He will say: `Glory to Thee! Never could I say what I had no right (to say) ... Never said I

to them aught except what Thou didst command me to say that, `Worship God, My Lord and Your Lord . ... " (Quran, 5:116-117).

إِنَّ مَثَلَ عِيسَىٰ عِندَ اللَّهِ كَمَثَلِ آدَمَ خَلَقَهُ مِن
تُرَابٍ ثُمَّ قَالَ لَهُ كُن فَيَكُونُ (آل عمران: ٥٩)

"Verily, the similitude of Jesus before God is as that of Adam; He created him from dust, then said to him `Be' and he was." (Qur'an,. 3:59).

How could the Qur'an, which contains such refutations of the beliefs of Christianity, tell the Muslims to respect the present Torah and Gospel?

In view of the above, your objection, that why Muhammad (p.b.u.h.a.h.p.) did not tell'us to remain aloof from Gospel and Christianity, is off the mark.

Also, you have asked: "What defects have you seen in the sayings of Gospel?" In reply I have to remind you of the contradictions and

baseless assertions of the Gospels, some of which may be mentioned, if necessary.

CHRISTIAN: I ask you to describe the contradictions and baseless assertions of the Gospels, according to the Islamic point of view.

MUSLIM: Although the previous discourse is enough to show the untrustworthiness of the Gospels (because they were written by persons who were not trustworthy); still to make the subject clearer I note here a few examples of contradictions in the Gospels. If you have any acceptable explaination, please let me know.

How Long Did Christ Remain Buried in his Grave?

Matthew writes:

"For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" *(Matthew, 12:40).*

But the Gospel according to Mark shows that Jesus did not remain in his grave for more than one day and two nights. The following are his words:-

"And now when the even was come, because it was the preparation, that is the day before the sabbath, Joseph of Arimathaea, . . . went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus ... And ... he gave the body to Joseph." *(Mark,* 15:42-45).(It means that the body of Jesus was given to Joseph in the evening of Friday, the day before the sabbath.)

"And when the sabbath was past, ... very early in the morning the first day of the week, . . . entering into sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, . . . and they were affrighted. And he saith unto them, . . . Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen, he is not here ... . Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week ... " *(Mark, 16:1-9).* (First day of the week means Sunday, according to Jewish

system.)

So Jesus was buried in the night preceding Saturday, remained buried that night, and on Saturday and the night preceding Sunday. Early Sunday morning he was not in his grave. It gives us two nights and one day. It is clear that two nights and one day are not "three days and three nights" mentioned in Matthew above.

CHRISTIAN: The Jews and other people of those days generally used to count a part of the day as one day. Accordingly, Friday afternoon was first day, the whole Saturday was second day and the early Sunday morning was the third day. Thus three days become complete.

MUSLIM: First of all, Jesus was not buried in the afternoon of Friday, but in the night preceding Saturday. Mark clearly says: "When the even was come."

Therefore, even by your method of reckoning, Jesus was not in his grave for more than

two days.

Secondly, the word "day" was used for the whole duration, and not for a part of it, The Westminster Dictionary of the Bible says:-

"Day 1) An interval of time comprising the period between two successive risings of the sun *(Gen.* 7:24; Job 3:6). The Hebrews reckoned it from evening to evening (Ex. 12:18; *Lev.* 23:32; Jos. War iv. 9, 12) ... 2) The interval between dawn and darkness *(Gen. 1:5, 8:22)"*

Thirdly, even if we accept, just for the sake of argument, that your meaning of the word "day" is correct, it will account for three days; but in no way for "three nights." But the writer of the Gospel clearly says that Jesus was to remain "three days and three nights" in his grave.

CHRISTIAN: We invite you, if you like, to come to ... . Reading Room, so that fruitful discussions may be held.

MUSLIM: If the arguments, which I have previously put before you, have any weakness, it is your duty (as a Christian missionary) to point it out to me. Otherwise, you should admit that what I have written is correct.

I prefer the written argument as it is done with more thoroughness (and with full references); therefore, I am unable to come to the Reading Room. I am waiting for your reply concerning the contradiction of the Gospels about the period during which Jesus remained buried.

CHRISTIAN: Our reply is the same which we had written to you earlier. We find in ancient and historical books of Jews (like The Talmud) many such reckonings of the "day" - that is, they have written the word "day and night." while they actually mean only a small part of the day.

MUSLIM: I request you to let me have the full

references of the Talmud (with chapters and verses) where, as you claim, a part of day has been written as a "day and night." I may check it with the help of a Talmudist who comes to us from time to time.

CHRISTIAN: I do not have detailed information, at present, about the chapters and verses of Talmud which have connection with the subject of this discussion. I will inform you later on, after research.

Meanwhile, you may present other matters for discussion.

MUSLIM: Dear Sir? When you had no knowledge of the Talmud, you should not have written the following sentence in your previous letter: "We find in ... books of Jews (like Talmud)."

As a friend, I advise you not to write any unverified statement; otherwise, your words will lose their value.

CHRISTIAN: In fact, my information about the Talmud was very limited. Therefore, I could not quote the relevant verses. I want some more time to do further research on this subject.

MUSLIM: My Christian friend? It is more than one month* that I am waiting for your final answer about the contradiction of the Gospel on the subject of "three days and three nights" and "one day and two nights." Regretfully, I note that I have not received any affirmative or negative reply. I pray to God that this silence is not because of prejudice and blind adherence to the beliefs of the ancients.

Anyhow, I do not propose to talk any more about that contradiction (because you have taken refuge into silence). Now I am presenting to you another contradiction and I hope you will discuss it truthfully.

* Uptil now, i.e., 1972, many years after that letter no reply has been received.

Abuse by the Thieves:

Matthew writes at the end of the story of the crucifixion of Christ:

"Then were there two thieves crucified with him, . . . And they that passed by reviled him, . . . Likewise also the chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others; himself he cannot save ... The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth" *(Matthew, 27:38-44).*

But Luke says that only one of the thieves abused him, while the other admonished him for that bad behaviour:-

"And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?" *(Luke, 23:39-40).*

I request you to explain this contradiction.

(Note: When no reply was received, another

letter was sent with the suggestion that they should either give a logical reply or admit frankly that Gospels were wrong.

After a long time, the following reply was received.)

CHRISTIAN: You have asked us to admit frankly that Gospels were wrong. Why?

The path trodden by Christ has not been trodden by anyone. It is quite enough for you to know that Christ is alive and has eternal exist ence. He is the only man having a wonderful life. When you do not believe in the Gospel, how can we prove to you that Christ is Truth?

In any case, we may pray for you; nothing is done by our own hands.

Concerning the contradiction mentioned by you, we must advise you that from our point of view both versions are correct. In the beginning both of them reviled Christ; afterwards, one of them repented. For this reason, Luke ignored the one and mentioned the other only.

MUSLIM: I am sorry to have to point out to you that there is no evidence to support your claim, either in Matthew or in Luke. Both of the writers purport to write the whole incident, not only a part. Otherwise, they might have said that it was only a part of the story. We may give an example about the two stories written by them.

Suppose there are two widely-circulated dailies in Tehran. One of them writes, `Yesterday two persons from the country `X' abused the president of U.S.A.' The other writes: `Yesterday one person from the country `X' abused the president of U.S.A., but his companion admonished him, and said why was he reviling the president of U.S.A.'

The people, after reading these two versions, will surely say that the two dailies have contradicted each other.

CHRISTIAN: It appears from your letters that you think that the present Gospel has been altered, and its meanings are contradictory to

each other. Now, I would like to ask you the following questions:

1) When were these Gospels altered? Before Islam or after the advent of Islam?

2) What was the aim behind those alterations?

MUSLIM: Your questions are not relevant to the subject of our discussion. Because, alteration is not the. only cause of contradictions in a writing. Contradictory or wrong statements may be written by the original author himself, because he did not properly understand his subject, or because of faulty memory.

Therefore, even if we suppose that nothing was ever altered in the Gospels, we cannot close our eyes from its contradictions. And in this case it will be a proof that the writers of these books had misunderstood the facts and were not guided by the Holy Ghost.

But I would not like to leave your questions unanswered; and, therefore, I am writing a few sentences about alteration.

What is alteration? Alteration means that the original writing of a book is changed by others and loses its authenticity.

Alteration of the Gospels:

I do not think that anyone who has studied the early history of Christianity, can have any doubt about the Gospels having been altered.

The condition at that time clearly shows that the institution of Christianity was over-run and captured by new-comers and the Byzantine emperors. Miller, a Christian scholar, writes that a group of innovators took their place in the churches as elites; and as a result different teachings were invented.

The Byzantine emperors were trying hard to remove the traces of the original Christianity.

Religious leaders were killed, burnt or banished. One may clearly see the effect of that environment (which lasted for three hundred years) on Christian scriptures and books.

A fresh proof of this claim of mine are the fragments of the manuscripts of the old copies of the Gospels which were discovered not long ago; they are different from present Gospels.

John Alder, a well-known American missionary in Iran, writes that in one place two papyrus writings have been found which contain sentences attributed to Christ, but most of which differ from those which we read in the New Testament." *(Bastan-Shanasi Kitab-i Mugaddas, p.109).*

In view of the above, we may easily find out the period and motive of the alterations.

And after the advent of Islam, more alterations have been done; and changes are constantly made on the pretext of `correction.'

(END OF CORRESPONDENCE)

When the correspondence reached this stage the Christian correspondent stopped writing altogether. Obviously, he did not want dis closures of any more contradictions and myths of the Gospels and Bible. One thing clearly emerges from these letters - these Christians missionaries have not come to our country to tell the truth or to seek the truth. Their aim is something else. If they really wanted to spread the truth, they should have accepted it when it was shown to them. They remained chained to prejudice and blind acceptance of ancestral beliefs, when they should have admitted that the present Gospels were not revealed books: apart from the fact that their authors were unrealiable persons, even the matters written therein are not worthy of revelation.

It is not too much to hope that the Christian youths would look at their beliefs with more searching eyes, and would not remain fettered to the ancestral beliefs without critically studying them.

APPENDIX

(See Translator's Note)

Who Wrote the `Gospels'?

Now coming to the present four `gospels,' the first thing which must be mentioned is that it is not certain who wrote the first and fourth books.

The first is the `gospel' attributed to St. Matthew, who was one of the twelve apostles of Jesus Christ. But this `gospel' is based mostly on the `gospel' of Mark who was not a disciple of Jesus and had no first-hand know-

ledge of the events of the ministry of Jesus.

Westminster Dictionary of The Bible (under `Matthew') mentions that according to many scholars it is difficult to accept that Matthew was the author of the gospel. "Matthew reproduces about ninety per cent of the subject matter of Mark in language very largely identical with that of Mark. Now, it is highly improbable that an apostle would have used as a major source the work of one who in all likelihood had not been an eye witness of the ministry of Jesus."

Moreover, Papias wrote in about 140 A.D. that "Matthew collected `logia' (saying or oracles) in the Hebrew language and each one interpreted them as he was able."

But the original `gospel' of Matthew is not in Hebrew, it is in Greek; and Greek was not the language of Matthew!

It is clear that the book written by Matthew was lost and later his name was transferred to another edited work.

Likewise, it is not known who was the John, the author of the fourth `gospel',

Christian public is led to believe that it was written by John, the apostle of Jesus Christ.

But the above-mentioned Dictionary (under `John, the gospel according to') clearly says that many scholars believe that the author was some "disciple and follower of John the son of Zabedee (the apostle). His name is either unknown to us or, more likely, was John the Presbyter or Elder."

Writers of the remaining two `gospels' were disciples and followers of the Apostles, and most probably had not seen or met Jesus Christ at all.

Thus, not only were these four books written decades after Jesus Christ, but they were not written by his immediate disciples either. And at least two of them were written by unknown persons.

Gospels: Not Trustworthy

Apart from this dubious authorship, the texts of these `gospels' show that the writers, whoever they were, were not trustworthy.

Let me point out a few examples of blatant alterations:

The figure `7' was considered very impor tant to Israelites (no doubt, because of the pa-ganistic idea that God was tired after creating the universe in six days, and rested on the seventh day). Thus they were fond of adjusting known historical facts to fit in the frame of `7' or multiples of `7'. The author of the `gospel'

according to Matthew gives the geneology of Jesus Christ in the first chapter. He divides it into three parts of 14+14+14. And to fit the names in this scheme of `14,' he omits four names in between. He has omitted the name of Jehoiakim between Josias and Jechonias (thus presenting the grandson as the son); and the names of Ahaziah, Goash and Azariah between Joram and Ozias (thus presenting a great-great-grandson as the son).

It is quite apart from other known historical inaccuracies which permeate this geneology.

Then if you compare this geneology with that given in the `gospel' according to Luke (Chapter 3) you will find that the names between David and Joseph (husband of Mary) are completely different, putting one man in two different clans.

In the `gospel' of Matthew, Joseph was

son of Jacob, son of Matthan who was from the clan of Prophet Solomon son of Prophet David, and between Joseph and Prophet Solomon were twenty four generations.`

According to the `gospel' of Luke, Joseph was son of Heli, son of Matthat, who was from the clan of Nathan son of Prophet David, and between Joseph and Nathan were thirty nine generations.

Naturally, one man cannot be born in two different lines of David; he cannot be at one and the same time from the progeny of Solomon son of David and that of Nathan son of David.

This one example is enough to show that these so-called `gospels' are not truthful. In this background the English phrase `gospel truth' may mean anyfhing from the news-bulletins of Goebels to the 'information' of fighting countries. An observer has a right to ask that

if the writers of these `gospels' could have changed the established facts to suit their imagination, what assurance can be given that they did not change the dogma to suit their fancy?